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ANCIENT ORIENTATION UNVEILED

I

ORIENTATION played a dominant rôle in ancient religions, particularly in those that laid stress on ritual, of which orientation was an essential part. Now that ritual has become the safest cornerstone of the science of the history of religion it seems quite necessary to extricate the subject of ancient orientation from the Serbonian bog in which it has lain.¹

By orientation we mean the direction in which a priest, diviner, magistrate, augur, worshipper or plain citizen faced, standing or sitting, in the performance of a public or even private ceremony, a religious, political, or social rite—consecration, sacrifice, prayer, consultation of the gods, etc.

¹ There may be some who will object that this paper is not properly to be classed as archaeological. My own position is that archaeological principles are far more important than archaeological material, *per se*. If the principles stated in this and the following paper are accepted, then a norm will be set up that will determine the classification and meaning of innumerable archaeological data, and will give the why and wherefore of many hitherto unnoticed or supposedly insignificant peculiarities of artistic composition and juxtaposition.

As an instance of the application of these principles, I will cite a paper which I read before the last International Congress of the History of Art in Rome (1912) on a method for distinguishing Byzantine works of art from their Italo-Byzantine imitations. Very often this has been impossible to do either on stylistic grounds or from documentary proof, the similarity being so great. But I showed how, with the real Greek Byzantine artist the place of honor was always on the right hand of Christ, while the Italo-Byzantine artist, true to his Latin traditions, considered the left side of Christ to be the more honorable, thus providing an almost automatic means for distinguishing them. In a paper in the *Am. Jl. of Philol.* XXXVI, 1915, pp. 314 ff., entitled '*Grabovius—Gradius, Plan and pomerium of Iguvium*', and in another paper in the *A.J.A.* XVIII, 1914, pp. 302 ff., entitled '*Circular Templum and Mundus*', I touched on questions of Etruscan and Italic orientation, especially as related to city plans and consecration.

A prelude to the present papers was one on Ancient Orientation and the Lucky Left, read Dec. 30, 1914, at a joint meeting of the Archaeological Institute and the American Philological Association at Haverford; cf. *A.J.A.* XIX, 1915, p. 73.

Once the direction of orientation was determined everything was in front or behind, to the right or the left, and in order to attain precision it was customary to divide both heaven and earth into quarters. With the Greeks there were ordinarily but two halves, divided by a line running north and south into the eastern and western parts of the world. But nearly all other races, beginning with the Babylonians, added a second intersecting line running east and west, making both earth and heaven into four quarters, and the Etruscans subdivided these into sixteen sections for divination.

Such customs had the widest ramifications, affected the smallest details of private life and the good and bad fortunes of the individual, in the associations of luck and misfortune with the right and left. It is singular but true that modern scholarship has failed to understand and solve the most important questions involved.

In the first place we moderns are accustomed to thinking of right and left in connection with ourselves, or, in philosophic terminology, we think of them as something subjective and contingent, and not objective and permanent. Man is considered the unit to which they are related. This has relegated all right and left matters to an unimportant place. It was quite otherwise in antiquity, and the antique idea can be traced for some four thousand years or more, well into the Middle Ages. This antique idea was that the world itself and not man was the basis of orientation and direction, and that it was to the world as a whole that the ideas of right and left, luck and misfortune were related. There was a front and back, a right and left of the world. These were objective and permanent factors, to which the human associations of right and left were entirely subordinate.

This not only gives the key to many ancient ideas, customs, and ceremonies, but I have found that it had an unsuspected bearing on works of art. The theory of world orientation determines the direction in which artists make their figures move and face as well as their grouping and interrelation. I have seen certain cases in which neither style nor documentary evidence showed whether a work was Greek or Etruscan, Byzantine or Latin, in workmanship, and the matter was unexpectedly and simply determined by noting what scheme of orientation was followed.¹

¹ If a bird of good omen is on the right the work is Greek; if on the left it is Etruscan. If a religious or triumphal procession moves from right to left it is

Here again modern scholarship has had serious lapses, and, hypnotized by Greek traditions, has not understood that there were two great opposing orientation camps, the southern and the northern, one championing the left as the lucky side and the other holding to the lucky right. These differences, as we shall see, were based on opposing theories as to the origin of the universe and the relations between gods and men.

The commonly understood direction of orientation is toward the east; so common as to have given its name to the idea. It is part of our ancient inheritance. In all religions the east was regarded as the source of life and luck. With the increasing popularity of some form of sun worship it was inevitable that prayer should be offered facing the east. But this eastern orientation seems to have been not primary but secondary. More primitive and basic were two schemes, connected perhaps with pre-solar cults, which developed two forms antagonistic to each other. This resulted with one group of peoples in an orientation toward the south and with another in an orientation toward the north. Both of these systems admitted the east as a secondary direction of orientation. When I say that the east was secondary, that is perhaps a wrong expression, for it was primary in both systems in connection with the earth, in the sense that the beginning of life was in the east, while its culmination was respectively in the south or north. Finally, there are distinct traces, though less important and less generally diffused either in place or scope, of

Greek rather than Etruscan or Roman, whose processions invariably move from left to right; always with the sun. When Livy (XXI, 31) says that Hannibal after crossing the Rhone, turned to the *left* to attempt his famous crossing of the Alps into Italy, his critics have always considered it a *lapsus calami* for *right*; whereas, as my friend Professor Westcott pointed out to me, Livy meant not Hannibal's left (for Hannibal was facing north and turned to *his* right) but the left side of the world, which was for Livy the east. He finds the same solution for the difficulty in Livy, XXII 3, 6, where Hannibal marches on Faesulae *laeva relicto hoste*, where the *laeva* refers to the geographical left of the world and not to Hannibal's left, a fact which will prove a great relief to future commentators. This was an interesting application of my new principle. I find it also applies to city plans, so that when an ancient document, such as the archaic topographical notes of the Argei on Rome, speaks of buildings as *cis* and *uls* (back of, in front of), *dexter* and *sinister*, it does not refer to the individual walking down the street as the starting point but to the city itself as oriented southward and to the individual as taking his ritual position. These cases are mentioned merely to indicate various fields in which the new principle can be applied.

an orientation toward the west. It was usually limited, we shall see, to associations with the dead and the deities of the underworld, as the logical antithesis of the life-giving east, although this fact also has not been always understood.

Each of the four points of the compass was, therefore, used in ancient orientation, and as modern scholars failed to see any special *raison d'être* for the variations, the question has been quite generally raised by them whether there really was any significance or system involved, or else they have seemed deliberately to close their eyes to the evidence. The most learned editor of the classic texts of ancient China, Legge, states, in the face of innumerable passages in these texts to the contrary, that the right hand was the place of honor in China.¹ In the same way Dr. Jastrow, the foremost authority on Babylonian religion and ritual, believes the right lucky and the left unlucky in Babylonia because he believes this to have been the case among all ancient peoples.² Such obsessions lead to unconscious falsification and misrepresentation of records and results.

It has been the same for Greece and Rome. The two foremost modern authorities on the ritual of classic religions, Wissowa and Bouché-Leclercq, have thrown up their hands in despair. Bouché-Leclercq says: "The successive deviations of custom on this delicate point and the contradictory allegations of ancient writers have so complicated the question that there is none more difficult of elucidation. The axis of the diviner's *templum* seems to have raced, like a crazy compass, all around the horizon, and one may justly wonder what becomes of a supposed exact science in the service of religion."³ This remark applies to Greece, Etruria, and Rome. Of the early Roman custom Wissowa⁴ says: "In the one known instance of the inauguration of a priest (that is of Numa as king, in Livy, I, 18) the augur turns his face to the east so that the north is on his left and the south on his right; but we have even more certain proof that the augur directed his gaze southward, so that he had the east on his left and the west on his right, and so it seems probable that the direction was left entirely

¹ *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. IV, II, p. 576, in note to *She-King*, Pt. IV, Bk. I, Ode 7; and *passim*.

² *Aspects of Religious Belief and Practice in Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 170; *Die Religion Babylonien und Assyrien*, II, pp. 238, 288, 635 and *passim*.

³ *Histoire de la divination dans l'Antiquité*, IV, p. 20.

⁴ *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, p. 452.

to the choice of the augur." This quite unacceptable suggestion of Wissowa shows to what a state of helplessness the apparently divergent testimony has reduced the most brilliant and scholarly minds.

The same uncertainty and game of cross-purposes extends to the rest of the field and has been well summed up in an article by F. B. Jevons in *Cl. R.*, 1896, pp. 22-3, entitled '*Indo-European modes of orientation.*' He begins with J. Grimm's¹ statement that the primitive Aryan faced east: Aryan words for "east" mean in front, for "south" to the right and for "north" to the left, and as the Aryan's gods were in the north, therefore *north* and *left* were lucky. This theory survived in Rome. But the later period of the Aryans, as represented by the Greeks, *et al.*, reversed this, and since they regarded the right as lucky, they must have faced to the west! The second authority, O. Schrader,² in opposition to Grimm, contends that as Sanskrit, Greek, and Teutonic sources agree in regarding the right as lucky, this was the original Aryan notion. He also believes that in order to have the east on his lucky right side the primitive Aryan faced north and not either east or west. On the other hand he argues that the Romans must have faced south in order to have the east on their left. "Thus between them Grimm and Schrader box the compass" as Jevons remarks; and he also justly adds that they give no adequate reasons for their shiftings of the compass. He then proposes a solution of his own, based not on position but on motion, which it is needless to discuss at this point.

Now, it must not be imagined that this question is merely academic, technical, and of limited bearing. Quite the contrary, it colored the thought of almost every ancient people. If we consider Rome as a typical example, it is a well-known fact that the whole of Roman religious and civil polity, the correct relation between the state and the gods, the *pax deorum*, the minutest details of civic and military and even private activities, were managed by augury; and augury was based on the auspices; and the auspices were limited and determined by the *templum*, both celestial and terrestrial; and the *templa* and auspices were both dependent on orientation. Consequently orientation was the basal concept of primitive ritual and divination, and necessary for the proper interpretation of the will of the gods. It was both a divine insti-

¹ *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*, pp. 980-986.

² *Prehistoric Antiquities of the Aryan Peoples*, pp. 254-257.

tution and a constant medium of divine communications. The site of Rome, as well as that of every other ancient city of Italy, was surveyed, limited, and consecrated on the basis of a scheme of sacred orientation, and every detail of the city's life from that time forward was based on the same method of ascertaining the divine will, by consulting the signs in the heavens and in the victims within the framework of orientation. This alone would make of orientation a distinctly archaeological subject. Orientation even determined on which shoulder a person should fasten his mantle!

What was true of Rome was also true in broad lines of Etruria, India, China, Persia, Assyria, the Hittites, and Babylonia.

An important consequence follows from whatever system of orientation was adopted by a nation. It is the association of luck, good fortune, good omen with the right or left hand. It has already been noted that for all peoples the source of luck and life was the east. Now, given the fact that the world was supposed to have a right and a left side, it followed that when a person took the proper ritualistic attitude, the side of him that was toward the east, whether it was his right or left side, was the lucky side. The non-recognition of this fundamental and obvious fact is what lies at the basis of the confusion in modern interpretation. No nation that faced to the south in all ceremonies could possibly consider the right side as lucky because that side was toward the west, the abode of death.

What was the grouping of ancient nations in regard to orientation? The following list is the result of my personal investigations and is entirely novel. I believe no such classification has ever been attempted.

SOUTHERN ORIENTATION AND LUCKY LEFT	{	Egypt	NORTHERN ORIENTATION AND LUCKY RIGHT	{	India
		China			Greece
		Babylonia			Jews
		Assyria			'Barbarians'
		Persia			Celts
		Etruria			Goths, etc.
		Italic tribes			
		Rome			

From this list it is clear that the common modern idea that the right side was universally considered lucky from the earliest times, is a fallacy to be relentlessly exploded. Strange as it may seem to us, who are the spiritual heirs of Greece, the word *sinister*

to the Romans meant lucky, and birds seen on the left, *sinistral* *aves*, were birds of *good* omen. The same birds seen in the same spot—that is, on the east side—by a Greek diviner would have been right-hand birds for him, and of course also lucky. He would have been facing north instead of south. In connection with the above grouping it is interesting to note two cases of contamination. One would expect the Jews to follow the universal oriental and Semitic system of the lucky left; whereas in the Old Testament are distinct traces of the lucky right,—a fact that suggests Hellenistic contamination. The second case is quite simple of explanation. It is the gradual substitution, under the Roman empire, of the Greek scheme of the lucky right, first among the literary class who made a fetish of Greek ideas, and then among the majority of cultivated persons, so that only in religious rites and popular belief was the old Roman system conserved.

Returning to the two opposing schemes of the groups mentioned above, can any reason be given for this difference of orientation? I think this is possible, but it is a rather speculative question, and I make here a purely tentative suggestion. As the direction of orientation is for the purpose of establishing communication between gods and men, we would naturally expect to find that in the group that faced south the idea was current that the gods came from the south into the world; while the north would be the source and abode of the gods for the other group. Now there is distinct evidence corroborative of this inference. In the southern group the earliest people whose literature furnishes us with material are the Babylonians. We cannot expect to get at rock-bottom reasons in such derivative civilizations as the Hittite, Etruscan, Roman, Assyrian, etc. If we turn, then, to Babylonian legend we find that the god Ea, who was usually regarded as the creator of human society—material, social and religious,—was considered to have manifested himself to mankind by rising up from the Persian gulf, at the southernmost boundary of Babylonia.¹ Communication between god and man was, therefore, thought by Babylonians to have begun in the extreme south. In races that borrowed an already developed ritual from Babylonia—such as the Assyrians, Persians, Hittites, etc.,—no such ultimate connection is needed. “Theirs not to reason why;” theirs but to say,

¹ Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 137 and *passim*; *Religious Belief in Bab. and Assyria*, pp. 88–89 and *passim*; *Die Religion Bab. u. Assy.* I, p. 125 and *passim*; Radau, *Bel, the Christ of Ancient Times*, pp. 9 ff.

"Aye, Aye." In the same way we find that the gods came to earth in the north according to the myths of India and Greece. Apollo came to earth in the land of the Hyperboreans when he descended from the empyrean and revealed god to man. For Vedic India the way to the gods is the northern route; and as they live in the north the mystic hypnotizes himself to follow this northern path to achieve union with the divine.

This leads directly to the solution that I believe I have found for the apparent confusion of ancient orientation. It is quite simple and can best be studied in the Roman field. The fact that among Etruscans and Romans we find the use of southern and western as well as of eastern orientation does not mean, as Bouché-Leclercq thought, that there were several systems, nor, as Wissowa suggested, that there was no system at all. On the contrary, it shows that there was an extremely rigid and elaborate system, more exact than anyone had imagined. The system was based on all three orientations: a celestial orientation to the south; a terrestrial orientation to the east; and a chthonic or infernal orientation to the west. They related respectively to the phenomena of the gods and the heavens; to the phenomena of mankind and the earth surface; to the phenomena of the spirits of the dead, the chthonic gods and the infernal regions. The three together covered the whole universe: the north was pure negation.

This triple orientation corresponds exactly to the three forms of the sacred *templum* used by Etruscans and Romans as we are informed by Varro (*L. L.* VII, 6-13) who says that there are three kinds of *templa*: that established by nature in the heavens, that marked out by auspices upon the earth, and that made by analogy (*i. e.*, to the heavenly) under the earth. The intimate connection between the *templa* and orientation is obvious, as the *templum* was based entirely on orientation. A *templum* is a consecrated area.

The three orientations might either be used in distinct separate ceremonies, or they might be combined in a single ceremony, being used in its different phases or periods. A shifting of the point of orientation to correspond to a variation in the scope of the ceremony is an exact parallel to the shifting of orientation in prayer during the course of the day or the progress of the liturgy, which we know to have been an early Roman custom. This shifting followed the course of the sun from east to west passing by the south: the sun-wise circumambulation.

While the Greeks did not lay nearly as much stress on orientation, we find among them a similar use of three orientations: a celestial orientation to the north; a lucky human orientation to the east; a chthonic and funereal orientation to the west.

The only orientations that were mutually exclusive in the Greco-Roman field were, therefore, the southern and the northern. They do not appear together. This appears, however, to have been a later development. In India, China, and Babylonia all four points of the compass were used for orientation: but as two of them were connected with death and the other life, it came to be felt, probably, that there was an unnecessary duplication and the west alone was retained to represent this side of ritual.

This association of ideas—in fact the entire scheme here outlined—is, I believe, peculiar to myself, and is here published for what is may be worth for the first time, though it was partly outlined in a paper read during the Christmas holidays of 1914. At that time I had not yet studied the question of Chinese orientation and had accepted some casual statements that in China the right hand was lucky, the left unlucky, and that the orientation was to the north and east. Since then I have been through the main Chinese classical texts and have not only found that with them orientation had an extraordinary importance but that it was based, contrary to the common statement by Legge and others, on the lucky left and on the southern direction. The material on Chinese orientation is not only large but perfectly clear. Another fact, which I have ascertained since reading the above paper, is that Egypt used the southern orientation.

The present paper is necessarily a brief synopsis of the facts, and will be expanded into a special volume which I have in preparation on the subject of ancient orientation.

EGYPT

In my examination of Egyptian texts I failed to find any data on orientation corresponding to those of China, Babylonia, India, and Rome. There were some indications of southern orientation, it is true, but in order to be sure I appealed to the great authority and wide acquaintance with the texts of Prof. James H. Breasted. I quote from his letter of March 25, 1915: "The situation with regard to right and left in Egypt is dependent on the Egyptian's orientation. He faced south, hence the left was the east, the residence of the leading sun-gods; and the right was the west the

kingdom of death." It pleased me that Professor Breasted should recognize so clearly the connection between orientation and the luck of right-left. So many modern writers have failed to do so and have thus obscured the issue.

The best examples of the southern orientation are furnished by numerous illustrations of the sun-boat. It moves from left to right, often with the sun-disk at the prow. It is needless to call attention to the fact that a sun-motion from left to right involves facing the south.¹

Similar are such sunrise scenes as that in the Papyrus of Ani of the Book of the Dead, Plate 2. The sun-disk upheld by the two arms of the emblem of life (Ankh), resting on the Tet is adored above by the six apes of the dawn and below by Isis, representing the dawn, who kneels on the left and by Nephthys, representing the sunset, who kneels on the right, respectively placed in front of the mountain of the east and that of the west.

Osiris, king of the underworld and of resurrection, is called "the first of the westerners," and while the west was the real abode of death, there are also traces that there was a similar association with the north. The Osiris boat faces in the opposite direction from the sun-boat, as is logical: it proceeds from right to left.²

In connection with the question of the lucky left it is interesting to note that Bes carries the young sun-god on his left and not on his right shoulder.³

But in view of the casual nature of the references to orientation, it is clear that this part of ritual had but slight interest for the Egyptian mind; and this seems strange when we consider how essentially material and formal was the Egyptian mode of thought. Still, such as it was, there is no doubt that whatever primary orientation existed in Egypt was southward, with the lucky left as a consequence.

CHINA

Ancient Chinese orientation appears to be a *terra incognita*. Dr. Jastrow was inclined, on the faith of a certain text, to attri-

¹ Mariette, *Denderah*, IV, p. 64. Budge, *Osiris*, pp. 62-65.

² Mariette, *loc. cit.* Budge, *op. cit.* pp. 73-77.

³ Consult for sun-boats, Osiris boats, upheld sun-disks and Bes, Lanzzone, *Dizionario di mitologia Egizia*; for Bes holding the sun-god, Wiedemann, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 164, fig. 48.

bute the northern orientation to China, and before I had myself studied the question, I provisionally adopted this suggestion. This would result, of course, in the lucky right and unlucky left, and in harmony with this supposition that great authority on Chinese religious literature, Mr. Legge, has emphatically stated that in China "the right was anciently the place of honour." Now, after examining, myself, page by page, the classic texts of ancient Chinese literature, I am able to state that both of the above statements are absolutely unfounded and the reverse of true: that (1) Chinese orientation was toward the south, and (2) the left hand was the place of honor and luck. Not only can this be deduced from numberless passages, but the theory on which these two customs are based is actually stated and explained. In fact there is no ancient literature in which orientation is as fully stated and exemplified as the Chinese. Furthermore, there is no people with whom orientation played a more important and a wider rôle. It is quite refreshing to be able to let the ancient spirit speak so clearly on its own behalf instead of being obliged, as we usually are, to offer our own deductions. And, furthermore, the ancient customs are even now followed in modern China.

An appendix to *Yi-King*,¹ the earliest of the Chinese classics, a treatise of geometrical mysticism, thus explains the southern orientation. After saying that god and all things issue forth in *Kan*, which is the east of the world, it states that they are then brought into harmony in *Sun*, which is the southeast. After that comes the culmination of life in *Li*, the south; for "Li gives the idea of brightness. All things are now made manifest to one another. It is the trigram of the South. The Sages turn their faces to the South when they give audience to all under the sky, administering government toward the region of brightness."

The interrelations of right and left with honor and fortune are quite fully explained in the bible of Taoism, the *Tao Teh King*.² This passage is the more important to quote in that it so clearly explains the connection of death with the west and the right hand, and in that it is at the same time an *apologia* for the Chinese hatred of war. "Now arms, however beautiful, are instruments of evil omen, hateful, it may be said, to all creatures. Therefore

¹ Appendix V, ch. IV, 9, in Legge, *Sacred Books of the East*, XVI, pp. 442 ff., especially p. 425.

² Legge, *op. cit.* XXXIX, p. 73; from Pt. I, ch. 31. 1. The date of the *Tao Teh King* is supposed to be the sixth century B.C.

they who have the Tao¹ do not like to employ them.—2. The superior man ordinarily considers the left hand the most honorable place, but in time of war the right hand. Those sharp weapons are instruments of evil omen, and not the instruments of the superior man; he uses them only on the compulsion of necessity. Calm and repose are what he prizes; victory (by force of arms) is to him undesirable. To consider this desirable would be to delight in slaughter of men; and he who delights in this slaughter of men cannot get his will in the Kingdom.—3. On occasions of *festivity* to be on the left hand is the prized position; on occasions of mourning the right hand. The second in command of the army has his place on the left; the general commanding in chief has his on the right;—his place, that is, is assigned to him as in the rites of mourning. He who had killed multitudes of men should weep for them with the bitterest grief; and the victor in battle has his place (rightly) according to those rites (*i.e.* of mourning)."

This passage has a bearing far transcending the borders of China. It can be used to explain the drinking customs of Greece and the funerary orientation of Greece and Rome.

The Chinese classic for ritual and ceremonial is the *Li-Ki* or Book of Rites. It is full of passages which show how the whole system was based on southern orientation and lucky left.

(1) The diviner, in the ceremony of consulting the will of heaven through the tortoise-shell, faced south. "Anciently the Sages, having determined the phenomena of heaven and earth in their states of rest and activity, made them the basis of the Yi (*i.e.* of divination by the tortoise). The diviner held the tortoise-shell in his arms, with his face toward the south, while the Son of Heaven (the Emperor), in his dragon-robe and square-topped cap, stood with his face to the north. The latter . . . felt it necessary to . . . obtain a decision in regard to his purpose . . . giving honor to Heaven (as the supreme Decider)."²

(2) The Son of Heaven, in ceremonies where he was supreme faced the south. "When a sage Sovereign stood with his face to the south and all the affairs of the Kingdom came before him, etc." In the imperial palace he gave audience in the Hall of Distinction where "the Son of Heaven stood with his back to the axe-embroidered Screen and his face toward the South."³

¹ The term *Tao* is not easy to define. It means the way or mode of being of the perfect soul and is close to the Buddhist absorption into non-being.

² Legge, *op. cit.* XXVIII, p. 233, from Bk. XXI, II, 25.

³ *Ibid.* XXVII, p. 111; XXVIII, p. 29, 61.

The same philosophy of southern orientation as in the *Yi King* is given in the *Li-Ki* when it says: "A ruler stood with his face toward the South to show that he would be (in his sphere) what the influence of light and heat was (in nature). His ministers stood with their faces to the north, so as to face him."¹

In speaking of primitive customs in the earliest ages of man it says (Bk. VII, 1, 7): "The dead are placed with their heads to the north, while the living look towards the south."² In the ceremony of the calling back of the soul after death, the persons calling stood with their faces to the north, inclining to the west: thus associating the two directions, with the stress on the north. It is interesting to note that Chinese orientation had its color symbolism according to the *Li-Ki*.³ For the east it was green, for the south it was red, for the west white, and for the north black. It seems fairly certain that the association of death with the north was primary and that those peoples who associated death with the west were either believers in the northern orientation or, like the later Romans, influenced by those who believed in it. For it could hardly fail to seem abnormal to the Greeks to associate the warm and life-giving south with death, as Vedic India did and as logic demanded that all north-orientationists should do. For India, as we shall see, the south was the abode of the dead. Greek imagination found in the dying western sun the excuse for casting aside this much of Indian cosmic symbolism.

The passage on which Dr. Jastrow based his idea that the Chinese oriented to the north belongs to the above class of death-orientations. It is a prayer to his dead ancestors by Chow-Kong. The other passage which Jastrow cites, refers to the fact that the Chinese compass points south, an interesting confirmation of southern orientation.

In the description of the Royal Palace in that other Chinese Classic the *Shu King*, the Annals or Book of History (cf. Ku Hsi), we see that from early times the palace faced south; that all its five gates opened to the south on the same axis; and that all ceremonies are based on southern orientation.⁴ It is still so in modern China. That near-classic and cornerstone of Confucianism, the book of Mencius,⁵ discusses the extraordinary fact that

¹ *Ibid.* XXVII, p. 423, from Bk. IX, 1, 14.

² *Ibid.* XXVII, p. 369.

³ *Ibid.* p. 328.

⁴ Legge's notes to the *Shu King*, *Chinese Classics*, V, p. 237 (Scribner).

⁵ Legge, *Chinese Classics*, II, p. 226, from Bk. V, II, IV, 1 (Scribner).

the great scholar Shun had "stood with his face to the south and Yaou, at the head of all the princes, appeared before him at court with his face to the north." The point to this is that Shun was supposed not to be emperor but only vice-regent, and that Yaou was emperor. And in this connection Confucius is reported to have said: "at that time in what a perilous condition was the Empire. Its state was indeed unsettled." In other words, so much importance was attached to this scheme of orientation that the kingdom was supposed to be at death's door if it was disregarded. But Mencius denies the inference and sets things right by pointing out that Shun was co-emperor at the close of Yaou's reign. In fact Yaou wished him to be his successor also in place of his own son. Therefore he had a right to face south.

Another classic collection, the *Shih-King* or "Book of Odes," being composed of poems, would naturally not contain as specific material. Still even here there are passages that bear out the same system. The left is always mentioned before the right, and so given the place of honor, as also in several passages of the *Li-Ki*.¹

Many corroborative details can be mentioned. The left was the place for the general and officers of any army, the right for the soldiers.² In feasting the cup with which the guest was pledged was placed on the left.³ In selecting the most honorable part of a sacrificial animal to be given away, it was the left quarter that was chosen.⁴ The bow was suspended at the left of the house door at the birth of a child, for his use when he grew up.⁵ When the child's head was shaved at the end of the third month a portion was left on the left of the boy's head, and on the right of the girl's—showing the greater honor given to the boy.⁶ In as-signing positions at a gathering the men were placed on the left, the women on the right.⁷

¹ *Shih-King*, Pt. II, Bk. VII, Ode VI, 1 (Legge, *Chin. Class.* IV, 1, p. 395). Cf. Pt. II, Bk. VI, Ode X, 4; Pt. III, Bk. I, Ode IV, 2 (p. 443), Ode I (p. 428), and Ode III (p. 438); Pt. VII, Ode VI. See also the translation in *Sacred Books of the East*, III; Dec. II, Ode VIII (p. 326); *Lü*, Ode III (p. 339); Minor Odes, Dec. VI, Ode VII (p. 371); Dec. VII, Ode VI (p. 374); Major Odes, Dec. I, Ode VIII (p. 396), and pp. 378, 383.

² *Li-Ki*, Bk. XV, 39 (*Sacred Books of the East*, XXVIII, p. 77).

³ *Ibid.* Bk. XV, 42 (XXVIII, p. 78).

⁴ *Ibid.* Bk. XV, 54 (XXVIII, p. 81).

⁵ *Ibid.* Bk. IX, I, 17 (XXVII, p. 424).

⁶ *Ibid.* Bk. X, I, 20 (XXVII, p. 473).

⁷ *Ibid.* Bk. XXXI, 10 (XXVIII, p. 368).

Many more passages might be quoted especially from the *Li-Ki*, the official book of ceremonial, but these are more than sufficient for my present purpose.

BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

The Babylonians practised the Southern orientation. This fact, denied by Kugler¹ was clearly demonstrated by Dr. Jastrow in his paper on "Babylonian Divination,"² the main points of which I shall recapitulate. The Babylonians divided the heavens into four regions, and the order in which they are enumerated is: south, north, east, and west, showing that the division was made while facing the south. In the application of this division to the earth, the same fact is evident. The southern section is identified with Akkad, or Babylonia, which is first mentioned and in fact occupied the south and central part of the universe to the Babylonians. The east section or Elam is connected with the left; the west section or Amurru (Syria) with the right; while Subarti (later Assyria) is the north and rear. The same idea appears when, for purposes of divination, the right horn of the new moon is connected with Amurru or the west and the left horn with Elam or the east. The division of the belt of the Ecliptic into three sections,—that in the centre relating to Babylonia, that on the left to Elam and that on the right to Amurru,—is also based on southern orientation.

Several other straws show which way the orientation wind blew. In the enumeration of the four winds in the divination material the south wind is named first. The order is, as in the four heavenly regions: south, north, east, west. In the same way the months and days of the year were connected with the four regions on the basis of the southern orientation, because it was the south or Babylonia that was associated in each case with the first, the fifth, the ninth, etc. While there was this "orientation of the heavens from the south for astrological purposes" there was also "a second orientation from the east" for the purposes of the cult; a custom in which Etruria and Rome were in harmony with Babylonia. What Dr. Jastrow does not mention in this article,

¹ *Sternkunde u. Sterndienst in Babel*, pp. 23, 226.

² *Zeitschr. f. Assyriologie*, XXIII, 1909, pp. 196–208. Cf. his *Die Religion Babyl. u. Assy.* I, p. 324 ("the stars of the south, north, east and west"), and p. 292: quotations from the Schurpu incantation tablets. The winds in the same order used as weapons by Marduk in the creation epic: Jastrow, *Religion of Babyl. and Assy.* p. 426.

but what is plain in Vol. II of his "*Religion*,"¹ is that even in some divination ceremonies; such as omens from consecrated oil and water, the eastern orientation was in use. It seems to me that the explanation of this fact is that the signs are, in this case, not sought in the heavens and therefore are not governed by the heavenly orientation, but by earthly orientations. This is a question that I am treating elsewhere and can now only allude to.

A word, now, as to the probable reason for the southern orientation of the heavens. Dr. Jastrow considers it rather difficult to furnish: he suggests that "all the larger and more important constellations being in the south, this region of the heavens would suggest itself as the natural direction to which to turn for purposes of observing the signs in the heavens." I have suggested another explanation based on Babylonian religion and cosmology itself and on that of its offshoots in Etruria and Rome. For them all the south was the bottom of the world and the north was its top. Now the creation myths of Babylonia make the world originate in water, in the humid abyss: the creator and civilizer of man is in some traditions Mummu or Ea, the god of the deep, who came as a fish-man, out of the waters of the Persian gulf at the extreme south. He it was who gave civilization to man. The world and the gods, man and culture began in the southernmost, lowermost parts of the earth. Here the cosmos emerged from chaos. It was here that god and man came together. Toward this point man must turn when he is studying the cosmos. The word for north, *iltanu*, which means the *lofty region*, shows that the "upper pole" was at the north. When the flood carried the ark to the highest mountain, it was to the mountains of Armenia, which was the upper part of *Subarti*, the region of the north.

Thus far Dr. Jastrow and I are in agreement, but we split when it comes to the relation of luck to right and left. Evidently Dr. Jastrow does not see the principle underlying the relation between orientation and luck: is prevented from doing so by the mistaken idea that all nations of antiquity, including of course the Babylonians, believed the right lucky and the left unlucky. It is a pity that he was unaware of the commonly understood fact that Etruria and Rome held the opposite theory, because, had he known of this material, believing as he did in the dependence of Etruria on Babylon in the field of divination, he would have probably divined the truth.

¹ *Die Religion Babyl. u. Assy.*, II, *passim*, especially p. 763.

My first instance of the preëminence of the left in Babylon will be from the most famous of early Babylonian legends, the epic of the solar hero Gilgamesh. He had excited the deadly enmity of the great goddess Ishtar and so the gods created as his rival the strange wild man, Heabani. But from enemies they became sworn friends and Heabani was brought by Gilgamesh to his imperial capital Uruk and seated by him in the place of honor on his *left* hand. This fact has not, I believe, been noticed.¹ To quote from Jastrow's summary: "Shamash [the Sun-god] and Gilgamesh promise Eabani royal honors if he will join friendship with them.

Come and on a great couch,
On a fine couch he [*i.e.* Gilgamesh] will place thee
He will give thee a seat to the left.
The rulers of the earth will kiss thy feet.
All the people of Uruk will crouch before thee."²

A peculiarity common to all nations seems to be to mention the most honorable of two things first, and so we find in Babylonian, as we did in Chinese, texts that the left is mentioned before the right. For instance when the ordering of the heavens and the stars is spoken of in the Creation Tablets it is said that the solar god Marduk opened great gates for the sun (Tablet V, lines 9-11):

He opened gates on both sides [of the ecliptic],
A lock he made strong on the left and the right,
In the midst thereof he placed the zenith.³

In the legend of the Deluge, the god tells the Babylonian Noah, Ziugiddu, to come and stand on his left side,⁴ and when the onslaught of the god Merodach on the dragon Tiamat, is described his horses are said to rush forward to left and right.⁵ In the very primitive Sumerian tablet in the University of Pennsylvania collection, translated by Dr. Langdon, the left is also mentioned first.⁶

¹ Haupt, *Nimrodepes*, p. 15, II. 36-39.

² *Religion of Babyl. and Assy.*, p. 480.

³ King, *History of Sumer and Akkad*, p. 78. Barton, *Archaeology of the Bible*, p. 244.

⁴ Barton, *op. cit.* p. 280.

⁵ Barton, *op. cit.* p. 242.

⁶ See *N. Y. Sun* and *N. Y. Times*, Aug. 15, 1915. Barton, *op. cit.* p. 286.

There are hundreds of examples in the literature of divination published by Dr. Jastrow¹ in his splendid *corpus*, which abundantly prove my theory of the lucky left and unlucky right to lie at the basis of Babylonian divination. I can quote only a few samples selected at random from the various classes of omens.

(1) BIRTH OMENS (Jastrow, II, pp. 919 and 931)

- | | |
|--|---|
| (a) If a woman bears a child lacking its <i>left</i> ear, the life of the king will be prolonged. | (b) If a woman bears a child lacking its <i>right</i> ear, the ruler will die. |
| (a) If a queen bears a child with six fingers on its <i>left</i> hand the king will plunder the enemy's country. | (b) If a queen bears a child with six fingers on its <i>right</i> hand the enemy will plunder the king's country. |

(2) OMEN FROM ANIMALS (Jastrow, II, p. 826)

- | | |
|---|---|
| (a) If a scorpion bites a man's <i>left</i> buttock, his adversary will sit on the mourner's bench. | (b) If a scorpion bites a man's <i>right</i> buttock, he will himself sit on the mourner's bench. |
|---|---|

(3) OMEN FROM THE HEAVENS (Jastrow, II, p. 672)

- | | |
|--|---|
| (a) If the planet Lu-Bat is seen near the <i>left</i> horn of the crescent moon the king [of Babylon] will dominate. | (b) If the planet Lu-Bat is seen near the <i>right</i> horn of the crescent moon the land will be devastated by the Westerners. |
|--|---|

(4) OMENS FROM THE VICTIM'S LIVER

I—Gall Bladder (Jastrow, II, p. 337)

- | | |
|--|--|
| (a) If the gall-bladder is split below on the <i>left</i> , misfortune for the enemy's army. | (b) If the gall-bladder is split below on the <i>right</i> , misfortune for my army. |
|--|--|

II—Finger, *Processus Pyramidalis* (Jastrow, II, p. 393)

- | | |
|--|--|
| (a) If the finger is shaped like a lion's ear and its rear part is destroyed on the <i>left</i> , the army of the ruler will be without a rival. | (b) If the finger is shaped like a lion's ear and its rear part is destroyed on the <i>right</i> , the enemy's army will be without a rival. |
|--|--|

III—Liver-gate (Jastrow, II, p. 365 and *Rel. Babyl.* p. 183)

- | | |
|---|--|
| (a) If the liver-gate is crushed on the <i>left</i> side and torn away, the enemy's army will be in terror. | (b) If the liver-gate is crushed on the <i>right</i> side and torn away, the ruler's army will be in terror. |
|---|--|

IV.—Hepatic Vein (Jastrow, II, p. 382)

- | | |
|---|---|
| (a) If the Hepatic vein is defective on the <i>left</i> , downfall of the enemy's army. | (b) If the Hepatic vein is defective on the <i>right</i> , downfall of my army. |
|---|---|

¹ *Die Religion Babylonians und Assyriens*, 2 vols. in 3 parts, Giessen, 1905–1912.

It is hardly necessary to say that in these omens what is misfortune for the enemy is good fortune for the ruler who is asking for the omen and for his country. I think the above samples from an abundant divination material will seem sufficiently conclusive.

The adoption by Assyria of the Babylonian system of divination was wholesale and complete, as can be seen by a number of documents of Assyrian date, but the unimaginative Assyrians added nothing: they were simply imitators.

PERSIA

It is interesting and puzzling to find, quite unexpectedly, that ancient Iran held ideas diametrically opposite to those of Vedic India in the matter of orientation. Iran aligns herself with Babylon and Assyria on the side of the south and the lucky left. I have been unable to find any reference to the Persian theory in modern writers, and in my pioneer examination of the original sources I may well have overlooked some material. But, what I have found, though scanty, is conclusive. It may be arranged in the order of the Zoroastrian epic of creation and revelation and the ordinances of ritual, the early texts being supplemented by the later Pahlavi material. The basal concept is the dualism of good and evil, represented by Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. The heaven of Ahura Mazda is reached from the Kinvad Bridge at a peak in the centre of the world from which one passes up to the star station, the moon station, the sun station, and on to the endless light—the four grades of heaven. The fullness of light is southward and in the south is Paradise.¹ Hell, the abode of Ahriman and his hordes of demons, is in the extreme north, and from the north they rush forth whenever they plan evil to the world.²

When Ahura Mazda began his creative activity he first produced two beings that strongly resemble the Platonic prototypes: (1)

¹ The warm south is the region of paradise; Yasht, XXII, 7: See Darmesteter, *Zendavesta I, Sacred Books of the East*, IV, in note to Vendidad, Farg. II, 10.

² The Bundehest clearly places hell in the north. See Darmesteter, *Zendavesta*, I, p. 75; II, p. 323; IV, p. 2; as do also passages in the Vendidad and other texts quoted in Jackson's paper, referred to below. Cf. Geldner, *Studien*, I, p. 113; *Kuhn's Zeitschrift*, XXV, pp. 505 and 526. An elaborate description of it occurs in *Dādistan-i-Dinik*, ch. 33; see *Pahlavi Texts*, II, pp. 74 ff; in *Sacred Books of the East* XVIII.

Gayomard, the type and source of the humanity that was to be; (2) the Divine Ox, the source of all the varieties of animal and vegetable life that were to be. At once Ahriman produced corresponding evil and destructive forces, and rushed from the north to destroy Gayomard and the Ox, who had to die in order that from their seed the varied world of nature might come into existence through sacrifice. In dying Gayomard fell to the *left* side and the Ox to the *right* side. This simple fact shows two things: (1) the superiority of the left over the right, and (2) the fact that the right and left here referred to are the right and left of the world,—an absolute and not a relative orientation.¹

After a slow death, the primeval Ox becomes the Ox-soul, which is translated to the moon and becomes the fertilizing source of all life on earth except man.²

The earliest embodiment of Gayomard on earth seems to have been a mythic hero named Yima, the first to receive the revelation of Ahura Mazda who gave him his golden seal and poniard and so conferred upon him dominion over the earth. After a while Ahura Mazda orders Yima to increase the size of the earth, which had become too small for the growing flocks, herds, and men. "Then Yima, resplendent, stepped forward *Southward*, on the way of the sun; then pressed the earth with the Golden Seal and stabbed it with the dagger saying: O Genius of Earth, Spenta Armaiti, kindly part asunder and stretch thyself afar, to bear flocks and herds and men." This process Yima repeated, three successive times, at intervals of 600 and 900 years. Stabbing the earth with the sacred dagger to give increased life has its counterpart in Mithra stabbing the bull, *i.e.*, the fertile earth.

Then came, after some ages, the revelation to Zoroaster or Zarathustra. When Zarathustra went forth in search of wisdom he travelled ever southward and on the completion of his thirtieth year he was met by Vohumano, the incarnation and agent of Ahura Mazda, coming from the southern quarter, who in seven conferences completed Zarathustra's initiation and instruction. Ahriman, of course, seeks to destroy Zarathustra and "from the northern quarter forth rushed the deadly evil spirit," but in vain.³

¹ Zendavesta, Vendidad, Farg. I, for the creations by Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, and Farg. II, for the progressive enlargements of the Earth.

² Darmesteter, Zendavesta, *ibid.* II, 9-10, *Sacred Books of the East*, IV, p. 13.

³ Zendavesta, I, Vendidad, Farg. XIX.

So it was with succeeding teachers; when for instance Zarathustra had passed away after preaching to Vistasp, the arch-angels "let the soul of Srito pass from the light (of supreme heaven) to the earth and the soul of Vistasp went from him into the light to meet it. Vistasp proceeded on to the propitious South." Then the attack: "there came the most horrid of demons from the horrid northern quarter, etc.¹

It is the same with the soul when it leaves the body of man after death. At once the evil drug springs forth from the north to seize it; and to exorcize this drug an exorcism was repeated such as this: "Thou perishest away to the regions of the north never more to give unto death the living world of the Holy Spirit."²

Passing to the field of purely human action, we find that in imitation of the threefold proceeding of Yima toward the south in enlarging the world, any man about to enter on any new enterprise must needs go through a ceremony to ensure its success which involved taking three steps southward and reciting an *Ahuna vairya* or special prayer.³

This southern orientation, as might be expected, lies at the basis of the religious ritual. The positions of the five main priests and their three assistants were exactly oriented within the ceremonial area. The High Priest was called Zoti. He stood at the north end, in the centre, facing south. Opposite him, at the south end, in the centre, and facing the Zoti was the priest called Sroshavarz, who had the oversight of all details. The others occupied the four corners and the centre of the east and west sides, and had charge respectively of the sacred Hô-m-morter, of the material for feeding the sacred fire, of the religious utensils, of the water, and of the washing.⁴ In beginning the ceremony the Zoti priest takes three steps—again the Yima symbolism—"from the Earth to the Sun station." That is to say he proceeds southward toward the fire altar.

¹ For the subject of the Persian hell in the north consult Jackson's article in *Proceed. Am. Orient. Soc.* 1885, pp. 60-61, with references to Vd. VII, 2; VIII, 21; XIX, 1; Bushyanta Yt. XXII. 42; IV, 9.

² Darmesteter, *Zendavesta*, II, 47, in *Sacred Books of the East*, XXIII.

³ Darmesteter *Zendavesta*, I, 263, in Pahlavi commentary on Vendidad, II, 16.

⁴ *Sacred Books of the East*, XXXVII, Pahlavi Texts, Pt. IV, p. 262, from Dinkard, IX, 6 (cf. Visp. III. 1; Vend. V, 58; VII, 17, 18) and p. 293 from *id.* IX, 43, 7.

What is most striking in the above material is not merely the consistent use of the southern orientation but the absence of any trace of a subordinate and coördinate eastern orientation such as we find in other nations. But I am positive that there must be in Persian literature traces of eastern orientation and that a more careful examination will eventually bring them to light. The lack of emphasis on the east may be a sign of primitive character: the recognition of the lucky left implies, in any case, a cult of the East.

This completes the group of Eastern peoples who followed the practise of southern orientation and lucky left.¹ The next people to be discussed, the Etruscans, show how this theory was brought from the east to the west.

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PRINCETON,
January, 1917.

¹ While I am inclined to believe that the Hittites also belonged to this group, I have not sufficient concrete proof to warrant a positive assertion.